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Guidelines on Searches for Senior Faculty Members or Administration

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Guidelines on Searches for Senior Faculty Members or Administrators

Rationale: Although many faculty members at USU have extensive experience serving on search committees for assistant professors, few faculty members have much experience on search committees for full professors or administrators such as department heads. This lack of institutional memory means that search committees are likely to use procedures that have been successful in recruiting assistant professors rather than developing a new set of procedures aimed specifically at recruiting senior faculty members. We provide the following guidelines for search committees to increase the effectiveness of search committee efforts in obtaining a stellar candidate pool of full professors.

1. **Timeline:** In many disciplines there is a "season" for faculty searches. Ads may appear early in late summer and early fall with review of applicants scheduled for late fall and early winter. Interviews are carried out in early spring and there is often pressure to move quickly before the "best" candidates are taken by competing institutions. Committees often expect that candidates actively searching for their first academic position will be checking publications and electronic resources at frequent intervals and will become aware of advertised open positions in their discipline. Search committee members often make personal contacts with potential candidates around the time the position is advertised. This timeline, while often successful in recruiting new assistant professors, is less likely to be successful in recruiting full professors or administrators. It is true that some full professors regularly check electronic and print resources for job ads but most do not. While faculty going through a divorce, engaged in conflicts with colleagues, or recently asked to step down from leadership positions may be actively looking for a new position, no department wants to limit their pool to these individuals. Instead, departments are faced with convincing senior faculty members who are successful and reasonably happy in their present positions to move to USU. This process often takes time. Logan is not a major metropolitan center and does not have a large hub airport. Consequently, some of the potential candidates may have never been to USU and may harbor misconceptions about USU and life in Utah. Candidates often remark during their interviews at USU that USU is a much better institution than they expected. Candidates comment on the high quality research being carried out, the excellent facilities, the collegiality they observe, and the beautiful location.

Recommendations: Don't restrict recruitment to formal searches. Departments should develop a list of rising stars and senior people who would enhance their departments. Use department and center seminar series to bring these individuals on campus and to show off USU. Make use of socializing time at national meetings to promote the department and USU. As soon as a position is anticipated, a department should consider whom they would like to see in the applicant pool and start recruiting for a "potential" position. Keep in mind that it may take time to convince senior faculty members that they can not pass up the

opportunities offered at USU. Even if targeted individuals are never hired at USU, they will be more likely to recommend USU to colleagues and students as future positions become available.

2. **Personal contact:** As we talk to chairs of successful searches about what brought candidates into the pool and discuss recruiting techniques with colleagues at other institution about what works, one technique jumps out as having the highest success—personal contact. This is especially true when hiring senior faculty members. Once the department has developed a list of candidates they would like to see in the applicant pool, contacts should be made with these potential candidates. The most persuasive contact is a long time friend or colleague. This person may be on the search committee, in the department, or in another department or college. Former students and post-docs may have a long standing relationship with the individual and could talk to them about a position at USU. In addition, we have learned that rank matters. Senior faculty members rarely respond beyond a polite refusal when contacted by junior faculty members with whom they have no professional or personal relationship. Senior faculty are more willing to discuss a position with other high ranking “peers” or senior administrators. Calls from senior administrators discussing their vision for the position can be particularly effective in recruiting senior faculty.

Recommendations: Departments should develop a list of individuals they would like to see in the applicant pool and contact each person about the possibility of a position in the department or college. The first contact may be a personalized letter describing the potential position and why this individual is particularly appropriate for the position. This must be followed up with a phone call from a long time friend or colleague (best choice) or a “peer” or senior administrator. More than one phone call may be necessary to persuade the person to apply.

3. **Recruiting individuals from underrepresented groups.** This often poses a challenge to search committees. We all know of searches where despite the best efforts of the committee, the top applicants or all of the applicants were white men. This occurs even when one group, women, are not uncommon in that field. We have interviewed senior women at USU and other institutions to better understand their willingness to move to a new institution. One factor is that women are less likely to “casually” apply for jobs or to apply for a new position to improve their current position. Sometimes “casual” applicants discover that they really like USU once they visit and become serious applicants. This can’t happen if they don’t apply. When departments list individuals they wish to recruit into the applicant pool, they should carefully consider women and minority faculty in the appropriate field so they are not accidentally overlooked, and then they should personally contact these individuals. In addition, successful senior women often weigh the opportunities offered by the new position against their current position. What can USU offer that their current position does not? Most of the women we interviewed viewed the opportunity to make an impact on a department, college, or institution as a compelling reason to move. Contact from

senior administrators to discuss their vision of the position and the opportunities for establishing or improving a program, changing the culture or raising the program, department, college or institution to a new level appear to be influential in the decision of whether or not to apply for a position. Some women said that they would be interested in talking to other women administrators to understand how effective women can be in the university's current climate. Some senior women are concerned about moving their family to a new location. Is there support for their partner to find a new job? What other forms of relocation assistance are provided? All members of the search committee and those initiating contacts should educate themselves on the resources available through the Provost's Office and Human Resources so they can answer questions as they arise. Since women are less likely to apply for new positions and often face difficulties in moving their families, department should consider internal as well as external candidates. Providing leadership opportunities to women and minorities at USU throughout their careers here could result in a pool of strong, internal candidates for administrative positions.

Recommendations: Develop a list of individuals the department or college would like to see in the applicant pool. Contact these individuals to encourage them to apply. This appears to be especially important for women and minority faculty. Have senior administrators contact potential applicants to discuss opportunities for "making a difference" at USU. Everyone wants to be hired on their merits. Do not tell anyone that they are being invited to apply because of their gender or ethnic status. Be ready to discuss relocation and dual career assistance with potential applicants. Do not overlook strong internal candidates.